in international prices, there was a surge in imports of SMP. In order to prevent cheap imports of milk powder from adversely affecting domestic producers, Government of India, after negotiations with its trading partners raised the bound rate of duty on Skimmed Milk Powder and Whole Milk Powder from 0% to 60% with an annual global Tariff Rate Quota of 10,000 metric tonnes at concessional duty rate of 15% on both lines taken together.

Cut in Support Prices of Wheat and Rice

120. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to cut the support prices of wheat and rice, in view of excess crops;

(b) if so, what decision has been taken in the matter;

(c) whether the State Government's have protested against the proposal; and

(d) if so, in what precise terms, and the Centre's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Import of Milk

†121. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to start the import of milk from April, 2001;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether the import of milk would have an adverse impact on the milk trade of the country?

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† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) No, Madam. Import of milk as classified under Exim code heading 04.01 has been free since 1995.

(b) and (c) In view of reply to part 'a', the questions do not arise?

Drought in Rajasthan

122. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Rajasthan is facing a severe drought for the third successive year of an intensity that is much more severe than in the past;

(b) whether it is a fact that out of thirty two districts severe drought conditions are prevailing in thirty one districts;

(c) if so, what is the extent of loss of lives and properties caused as a result thereof and the amount of relief provided to the state during the last three years; and

(d) what is the strategy drawn to combat the drought in the state in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) There has been deficiency of rainfall leading to drought-like situation during 1998-99; 1999-2000 and 2000-01.

(b) and (c) As reported by the state Government during 2000-01, drought situation is prevailing in 30583 villages in 31 out of 32 districts, affecting a population of 3.30 crore, cattle population of 4